



September 3, 2025

NFHS Field Hockey Weekly Rule Interpretations

Rule 1-6-5(c) & Rule 8-2 Penalty 1

Topic: Wire-caged face masks during and after a Penalty Corner (PC)

Purpose

Provide clear, consistent guidance where the 2025 rules book language created confusion about when to stop play and how to penalize a player who crosses the 25-yard line while still wearing a wire-caged PC mask.

Rules Involved

- **Rule 1-6-5(c):** Allows a smooth, rounded wire-caged face mask for defending penalty corners. The mask shall be removed at the completion of the PC. If no suitable opportunity arises, the mask may continue to be worn within the 25-yard area.
- **Rule 1-6-5 Penalty 1:** References assessing misconduct at the first stoppage of play.
- **Rule 8-2 Penalty 1:** For misconduct during play, the official takes an immediate time-out, issues the appropriate card, the player leaves immediately, and play restarts with the appropriate penalty.

Key Applications

- It is legal to continue wearing the wire-caged mask inside the 25 if there is no safe opportunity to remove it after the PC ends.
- It is a violation to cross the 25-yard line (into the midfield) while still wearing the wire-caged PC mask.
- Officials should whistle immediately, card, and award the free hit to the opponent at the appropriate spot on the 25.

Officiating Mechanics (Quick Steps)

1. See: Defender with wire-caged PC mask crosses the 25-yard line.
 2. Whistle/Time-out immediately (risk minimization).
 3. Card: Misconduct to the offending player.
 4. Restart: Opponent's free hit on the 25-yard line nearest the spot of the crossing; apply all free-hit-within-the-25 restrictions.
 5. Game management: Communicate briefly, reset promptly.
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Common Pitfalls to Avoid

- Do not wait for the next natural stoppage—this elevates risk and contradicts Rule 8-2 Penalty 1.
- Do not omit the misconduct card—crossing the 25 with the mask is both a team penalty (free hit) and a player misconduct.
- Do not permit play to continue simply because the player is “about to remove” the mask; the violation occurs upon crossing the 25 with the mask still on.

Game Scenario, Ruling & Explanation

SCENARIO: After a defended PC, the ball is cleared toward midfield. A defender still wearing a wire-caged PC mask controls the ball and dribbles across the 25-yard line into open field. The official immediately blows the whistle and issue a misconduct to the defender. A free hit is awarded to the opponent at the nearest point on the 25-yard line. **RULING:** Correct Procedure **COMMENT:** Rule 1-6-5(c) permits the mask during the PC and, if needed, within the 25 when no safe removal opportunity arises. Once the defender crosses the 25 still wearing the mask, risk increases and Rule 8-2 Penalty 1 requires immediate intervention: stop play, card, and restart with the opponent’s free hit on the 25. The “first-stoppage” language in 1-6-5 Penalty 1 is not applicable to this situation due to the safety-first directive.